

# The importance of employee voice



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This paper studies the ascertainity of the importance of employee voice within Heritage Hotels, India. It explains why the author is undertaking the research and what the author wants to achieve from this research. It continues with the literature review that highlights the seven different topics that has been explained in detail. It then talks about the Methodology in which it shows the different research methods that have been chosen and why the selective research methods have been chosen for this particular research. The paper then analyses the findings and discusses the result in detail. In the conclusion, recommendations have been presented which look at what employers would want to see in the future regarding employee voice.

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1. 0 Introduction

This research topic studies to ascertain the importance of employee voice within Heritage Hotels. It specifically focuses on how important the employee voice is today. It investigates people's perceptions on employee voice within

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the Hotel. Mahak Parwal, the author, feels that this study should be undertaken because as a current student and a future employee, she believes employee voice is and should be considered as highly important. With this study, the author also wants to find out the importance of employee voice, as well as know the employees' perception towards it – whether they think it should be there within the organization or not.

There has been a sharp increase in the significance in employee voice between academics, practitioners, and policymakers in the recent years. Boxall and Purcell (2008) state that among employers, the breakdown of the mass production era and the resulting quest for high-performance work practices that deliver flexibility and quality has produced prevalent experimentation through schemes for sharing information and consulting with employees, involving employees in workplace decision-making and soliciting feedback. Simultaneously, the global decline within the union membership has willingly opened the doors for different voice mechanisms options, whilst also prompting renewed debates over the need for union voice and supportive public policies.

There has been a growing interest in employee voice and interest in this topic has emerged over the last few years. Employee voice has been used to summarize several diverse approaches to employee relations, and numerous other terms have been interchangeably with employee voice. Employee voice is a critical element of organizational success. According to Lynch (2010), in times of uncertainty it is more important than ever that employers pay attention to a concept called employee “ voice.” This is because it can work towards developing the workplace productivity during its impact on

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employee engagement, creativity, retention and effectiveness. A more recent meaning of voice that has captured researchers' attention is a behavior that constructively challenges that status quo with the intention of improving it. Employee voice is a very extensive term among substantial width within the range of definitions that are been given by authors (for instance Poole, 1986; Strauss, 2006; Sashkin, 1976; Dietz et al., 2009). The aim of the paper is also to shed greater light on the meanings that organizational members derive from employee voice and what those different purposes may be.

## **1. 1 Aims and Objectives**

The following aim and objectives will identify how the researcher will achieve the research study objectives and provide background on how the objectives will be met through the academic study.

### **1. 2 Aim**

The aim of this study is to ascertain the importance of employee voice at the Heritage Hotels in India.

### **1. 3 Objectives**

The following objectives need to be satisfied in order to reach this aim. These are:

Define employee voice and its components.

Determine the importance of employee voice.

To investigate employees perception on employee voice.



To critically recognize how Heritage Hotels promote employee voice in a hypercompetitive environment.

## 2. 0 Literature Review

### **2. 1 Defining employee voice**

As defined by Boxall and Purcell (2003): 'Employee voice is the term increasingly used to cover a whole variety of processes and structures which enable, and sometimes empower employees, directly and indirectly, to contribute to decision-making in the firm.' Employee voice can be seen as 'the ability of employees to influence the actions of the employer' (Millward et al, 1992). Employee voice is a two-way communication between its employer and employee CIPD (2012). According to CIPD (2012), it is the process of the employer communicating to the employee as well as receiving and listening to communication from the employee. To get a basic understanding of what employee voice, one must understand what participative management is. Stueart and Moran (2007) states participative management focuses on increasing lower level employee empowerment during team building along with direct participative methods in order to involve the employee with the decision making of the organization. This has become one of the leading styles of management. The important of empowerment may not be obvious, however it is pertinent. According to Stueart and Moran (2007), there is a positive correlation between employee empowerment and better customer service, staff creativity and innovation, and flexibility. Employees are able to participate in the decision making process of an organization through flattening the hierarchical, top-bottom structure by the means of groups or teams and with direct participation. The <https://assignbuster.com/the-importance-of-employee-voice/>

concept of employee voice looks more into the opportunities in order for the employees to be involved within decisions together, which can either be through trade unions or by other means. “ It appeals to both those seeking greater business efficiency and to those looking for employee rights” (CIPD, 2012). Organizations have increasingly looked on ideas that directly engage employees, moving from representative participation in the last two decades.

CIPD research, according to Marchington, Wilkinson and Ackers (2001), suggests organizations that look to promote voice are usually those who believe that ‘employees want to contribute to the business’ and that ‘ for employees to have an effective voice, the significant element of the communication process is not what the employer puts out but what it gets back.’ Good managers distinguish that the knowledge required for the business to be competitive can only come out of employees’ heads. ‘ Voice is defined most typically in terms of two-way communications, an exchange of information between managers and employees – or ‘ having a say’ about what goes on in an organization’ (CIPD, 2012). Some managers feel that voice is a way for employees to represent their views to managers, and the different views presented by employees can be taken into account which, in turn, can be positive for the company. On the other hand, other managers take the more limited view that voice is not so much of a dialogue or a two-way exchange of thoughts as a method for the employees to be able to pass on their thoughts to managers in order to develop the company’s organizational performance. Employee voice is the most important characteristic of employee participation. If employee participation strongly

contributes to a greater customer service, then it straight away shows that employee voice is a significant feature in this equation. According to McCabe & Lewin (1992, p. 112), whilst participative management programs can be assorted depending on the company, the general scope and the amount of intended participation, the fundamental hypothesis remains the same, which is that “ employees possess sufficient ability, skill, knowledge, and interest to participate in business decisions.” For Dundon et al (2004: 1149), ‘employee voice is best understood as a complex and uneven set of meanings and purposes with a dialectic shaped by external regulation on one hand and internal management choice on the other’. There is a long tradition in employee relations literature of focusing on the level and effectiveness of employee involvement and participation in the workplace (Marchington, 2005).

## **2. 2 Purpose of Employee Voice**

According to Michael Armstrong (2006), there are four specific purposes for employee voice. The first purpose is basically to articulate dissatisfaction for individuals with the management team or in the organization. The second purpose provides as an expression of collective organization to management. The third purpose lets the management contribute towards decision making in particular concerning quality, productivity and work organization. Last but not the least it expresses the mutuality relationship between the employee and the employer. In addition towards the specific purposes for employee voice, Gorden (1988b) proves a fifth purpose. He had conducted a study with 150 students and the study confirmed higher employee satisfaction with his or her career and employer when the

organizational conditions are conducive to creating and receiving opportunities for employee voice. These rationales support in defining voice and offers a background on which one can base all of the studies and research.

## **2.3 Types of Employee Voice**

Since Employee Voice is vast within Human Resource there are many types of employee voice. According to McCabe and Lewin (1992), there are about four specific types that help engage the process for the grievance resolution. The first type of voice is the ombudsman; it is similar to a confidant that is proposed to considerately take note to the injustice and to offer any help to solve the issue. The ombudsman operates more like a channel of employee voice, relative than actual employee voice. McCabe and Lewin (1992) state for this to work, the ombudsman needs to be thoroughly familiar with the organization and also needs to promote particularly for the employee. The second type of employee voice, again defined by McCabe and Lewin, is the mediation. Yet again, mediation also acts as a channel for employee voice. In this situation, the mediator goes through an argument between the two parties and supports in reconciling and resolving the problem. He or she does not particularly make the resolving decision but persuades solutions for the employees to eventually decide from the provided options. The third type of employee voice is arbitration and it is distinguished by the fact that the arbitrator can make the final, binding decision. The arbitration is usually seen as the preceding step in a grievance process and needs to completely follow the standards, policies and procedures as written in the handbook for the employees. Last but not the least are, again discussed by the

aforementioned authors, tribunals and peer reviews. As the same for arbitration which is the third type of employee voice, the ultimate decision is requisite and needs to be in capacity of the employee handbook. The advantage to the internal tribunals is that employees are preferred to be judged by their peers rather than an administrator or manager: “ The advantage to these internal tribunals is that employees generally prefer to be judged by a “ jury of their peers” rather than an administrator or manager” (McCabe and Lewin, 1992).

Other than the grievance procedure as mentioned above, there are two other types of voice: 1. Representative participation, and 2. Upward problem solving (Armstrong, 2006). Representative participation is characterized by collective representation. Representative participation involves a formal mechanism which allows for the employee representation to solve issues of mutual interest and work more like a partnership between employer and employee, tackling issues together in a cooperative manner. Examples of representative participation would include trade unions or other staff associates/association. Employee voice is heard through an organized channel. The second type of employee voice is the upward problem solving. In this type of employee voice it works towards more of a teambuilding perspective. It basically involves two-way communication between the manager and the staff. “ Thus communication is characterized by suggestion schemes rather than partner schemes where employees independently suggest ideas or changes and then employer generally rewards them” (Armstrong, 2006). It includes the application of attitude surveys for employees in order to seek their opinion/speak through questionnaires which

can be beneficial for the organization. In this case employee voice is more on the basis of being communicative on a direct level from employee to employer. The main method of expressing voice is through questionnaires and forms instead of formal representation.

## **2. 4 Benefits and success factors**

Within the high performance workplaces, skills and knowledge are developed and enhanced which leads to high value enterprises and increasingly knowledge based economy.

Having a greater voice for employees' leads to the following (CIPD, 2012):

Employees' skills and knowledge can be better used, leading to higher productivity.

Employees feel more valued, so they are more likely to stay and to contribute more.

The organization gains a positive reputation, making it easier to recruit good employees.

Conflict is reduced and co-operation between employer and employee is based on interdependence.

### **2. 4. 1 Benefits for employees**

Employees benefit from the following (CIPD, 2012):

Having more influence over their work

Higher job satisfaction

More opportunity to develop skills

More job security at their employee is more successful as a result of ‘ voice initiatives’.

## **2. 4. 2 Success factors**

The factors that ensure success are the following (CIPD, 2012):

**Leadership:** without having active commitment from the top, initiatives will not succeed. Further down, managers also need to lead by example, while employee representatives should be effective leaders of those who they represent in the organization.

**Training:** middle managers who have brought up a top-down tradition of communication might find it complicated to acclimatize to a more open way to doing things and might need to be trained in communication skills.

Likewise, employee representatives may need training.

**Trust and openness:** without being honest, the communication initiatives will not succeed, even when messages may not be palatable.

The possible barriers of the success factors are reversed. The reasons for failure are cited as absence of leadership and lack of commitment from the middle managers in the organization.

## **2. 5 Employee Involvement**

The objective of employee involvement is to engage employees to a greater extent in the administrative activities of the organization. This facilitates employees in empowering, and moreover informs them to understand the

corporate activities and policies of the organization in a better way. It facilitates the psychological relationship between the employee and employer, which provides, to an extent, an allowance in the decision making process. Employee involvement has two major benefits, which can only take place after empowering the employees and decentralizing the management; employers are relieved by some portion of its administrative responsibilities. Secondly, when employees are given the empowerment, their responsibilities for the organization lead to success and so does their commitment and accountabilities. It moreover helps in elevating overall employee morale and job satisfaction. Thus it enhances in employee performance.

## **2. 6 Employee Voice and Organizational Performance**

Normally, having lack of proper communication leads to organizational conflicts. Employee voice facilitates in making the relationship between the employer-employee information flow. It has been argued that Employee Involvement and Employee Participation is essential for organizational performance and management employee interrelationship, which plays an equally important role in enhancing job satisfaction and hence in enhancing organizational productivity (Brown & Heywood, 2002 p. 103).

Within the context of Employee Voice, psychological contracts can also be analyzed which may also be involved with employment. The interrelationships of management are largely supported by exchange of compensation and services. This regularly escorts the employees' awareness to be obstinate with the growth strategies of the management. Employee participation in every organizational activity increases personal involvement.



With an increase in involvement the employees naturally perform optimally thereby proving that employee voice is of immense importance in enhancing organizational performance and productivity (Kirkman, Lowe & Young, 1999 p. 42).

## **2. 7 Employee Voice Chart**

The following figure presents the meanings and purpose of employee voice articulated from journal called The International Journal of Human Resource Management (Dundon et al, 2004).

### **Figure 1: Employee Voice**

**Voice represents**

**Purpose of Voice**

**Possible mechanism or channels of voice**

**Potential positive/negative outcomes**

Articulation of individual dissatisfaction

To remedy a problem and/or prevent deterioration in relations

Informal complaint to line manager; formal grievance procedure

(Reinforced) loyalty to organization/employee exit, withdrawal of beneficial discretionary behavior or inform expressions of dissatisfaction

Expression of collective organization

To provide a countervailing source of power to management

Recognition of trade union by employer; collective bargaining; industrial action

Partnership between management and employees/non-or de-recognition of union; anti union management ' tactics'

Employee contribution to management decision-making

To seek improvements in work organization, quality and productivity

Employee involvement and participation (e. g. upward problem-solving initiatives; suggestion schemes; attitude surveys; self-managed teams)

Employee commitment and identification with aims of organization; improved performance/disillusionment and apathy

Mutuality and co-operative workplace relations

To achieve long-term viability for the organization and greater ' people added-value'

Partnership agreements; joint consultative committees; works councils

Significant employee influence in decision-making/management communication-service to employee contribution.

Source: Dundon et al. (2004) The meanings and purpose of employee voice, The International

Journal of Human Resource Management, 15 (6): 1149-70. Reprinted by permission of the

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publisher Taylor & Francis Group.

## **2. 8 Organizational Background**

### **Heritage Hotels, India**

#### **2. 8. 1 Introduction**

Heritage Hotel is a joint venture between ITC Ltd. and Jodhana Heritage, signifying some of the best tradition of heritage hospitality and tourism in India. It presents over 37 selected heritage destinations, ranging from grand palaces to traditional bungalows (havelis) and magnificent forts: from adventure-filled jungle loges to tea garden homes and quiet nature resorts in different states of India, for instance Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir, West Bengal, Karnataka, Punjab, Goa, Punjab and Tamil Nadu. A holiday with the Heritage Hotels is always special: timeless bazaars, elephant and camel safaris, local festivals, desert camps and a selection of various adventure and sport activities. Rich in history, these destinations are enriched by stories of heroic fighters and illustrious queens of royal courts and princes who enjoyed their pomp, pageantry, gracious, and splendid living in these places. On the journey of the relentless passage of time, many legends have been relegated to the pages of history; others extolled in verse and sung by traditional bards and folk singers. Even today some of the legends live in palaces, forts and royal retreats. Their private homes indicate the visitor with elegant Heritage Hospitality from the hotel and offer a slice of history with one major difference.

## **2. 8. 2 The Secret of a Great Escape**

Heritage Hotel offers the secrets of a great escape. At every Heritage Hotel, customers will get the chance to experience the rich heritage and culture. Such cultures include a fort resort at the rim of a desert, or a county manor in the lap of a green valley. A jungle lodge in a wildlife forest reserve, or a palace or bungalow, resonant with the past. A picture-postcard cottage ensconced in mystic mountains or a splendid mansion on the spur of a hill. A spa in a heritage home, a houseboat on a sparkling lake, a colonial hill residence with tea gardens for a view, a mist-wrapped palace in fragrant plantations. Each hotel has a secret to share, a story to tell – and so will you. Moreover, each Heritage hotel has the blueprint of a great holiday, all laid out for tourists. Each hotel provides the opportunity to go where you get away to all that is not ordinary. All that is exclusive, while being affordable and unusual, without being over the top. Heritage Hotels' over 40 hotels are sited expediently at stunningly scenic locations and are easy accessible from major cities, making it the perfect holiday option. In particular, customers usually find atmospheric and boutique experience when it comes to selecting a hotel but Heritage Hotels are far removed from standardized sameness. Hospitality comes from the heart provided with a slice of heritage within modern amenities.

## **2. 8. 3 Heritage Hotels Mission**

The Heritage Mission is to assist and support the restoration of Heritage properties. They encourage owners of these properties to convert them into productive assets, and assist them, in providing technical expertise, sales, marketing, reservations and operational support, and services. Through

other initiatives, they help in the preserving the environment while at the same time promoting their rich culture, cuisine and handicrafts.

They endeavor to:

Providing a unique, enriching and affordable experience to customers

Generate local employment and well being

Set standards in Heritage Hotels & Tourism while promoting Heritage tourism

They hope to succeed in their mission with customers' whole-hearted support.

Employee voice is an important issue in studying participative management.

From the point of view of an organization, having a participative management program that incorporates several employee voice mechanisms would be in the company's best interest. By promoting employee voice within the workplace through a range of techniques, it will help an organization to fulfill the ethical and political need through revitalizing their bottom line by avoiding resignation rates and high exit.

Employee voice takes various forms in terms of both individually and collectively, and verbally and non-verbally. Furthermore, the concept behind employee voice appears to be timeless, as many of the publications throughout the past forty years have agreed with each other (employee voice: theoretical frameworks and organizational methods). Employee voice plays a huge role in participative management because in order for employees to work in an organization being able to communicate, presenting

ideas, and building relationships is required and essential according to the author. This is how participative management links to employee voice.

### 3. 0 Methodology

## **3. 1 Introduction**

The way in which the research is carried out can be considered in terms of the philosophy of the research which it is pledged to, the strategy of the research employed and, moreover, the research instruments utilized (and perhaps developed) in the pursuit of a goal - the research objectives - with the search for the resolution of the aim - which basically links to the research question. The research has been outlined for the research question and the research objectives in the introduction as well as in the literature review. The purpose of this chapter is to:

Discuss the research philosophy and relate that to other philosophies;

Develop the research strategy, together with the research methodologies adopted;

Introduce the research instruments that has been developed and utilized in the search of the goals.

## **3. 2 Research Philosophy**

A research philosophy is a conviction regarding the way in which the data about a phenomenon should be analyzed, used and gathered. The term epistemology - what is known to be true as opposed to doxology - includes different philosophies of the research approach. The rationale of science is the process of converting things known from doxology to epistemology. The

two major research philosophies have been categorized in the Western tradition of science, explicitly positivist, which is sometimes called scientific and interpretivist which is known as an positivist (Galliers, 1991).

### **3. 3 Positivism**

Positivists believe that reality is stable and can be observed and described from an objective point of view (Levin, 1988), i. e. without interfering with the phenomena of being studied. It should be argued that the phenomena should be isolated and that the observations should be repeatable. This frequently engages with the manipulation of reality with differences in only a single independent variable so as to recognize regularities in, and to form relationships between, some of the constituent elements of the social world. Predictions could possibly be made on the foundation of the previously explained and observed realities and their inter-relationships. “ Positivism has a long and rich historical tradition. It is also embedded in our society that knowledge claims not grounded in positivist thought are simply dismissed as scientific and therefore invalid” (Hirschheim, 1985, p33). This view is indirectly supported by Alavi and Carlson (1992) who, in a review of the research articles, have found that all of the empirical studies were positivist in its approach. Positivism has been a particularly successful association within natural and physical sciences.

There has, however, been a debate on the concern of whether or not the positivist paradigm is entirely suitable for the social sciences (Hirschheim, 1985). Many authors are calling for a more pluralistic attitude towards the research methodologies - an example being Bjorn-Andersen, 1985; Kuhn, 1970; Remenyi and Williams, 1996.

### **3. 4 Interpretivist**

Interpretivists argue that only through the subjective interpretation of an intervention in reality can be fully understood. The study of phenomena in its natural environment is vital to the interpretivists' philosophy, together with the acknowledgement that scientists cannot avoid affecting those phenomena that are being studied. There may be many interpretations of reality that can be admitted, but maintaining these interpretations are in themselves a part of the scientific knowledge they are pursuing. There is a tradition which has been followed by the interpretivisms, which is no less glorious than that of positivism and nor is it shorter.

### **3. 5 Methods of Research Used**

For this study, the descriptive research method was utilized. In this method, it is possible that the study would be cheap and quick. It could also suggest an unanticipated hypotheses. Nonetheless, it would be very hard to rule out alternative explanations and especially infer causations. Thus, this study used the descriptive approach. This descriptive type of research utilizes observations in the study. The purpose of employing this method is to describe the nature of a situation, as it exists at the time of the study and to explore the cause/s of particular phenomena. The researcher opted to use this kind of research considering the desire of the researcher to obtain first hand data from the respondents so as to formulate rational and sound conclusions and recommendations for the stu